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Alice Palmer Re-examined-Was Obama's First Political Boss a Soviet "Agent of Influence"?

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Obama File 90 Alice Palmer Re-examined-Was Obama's First Political Boss a Soviet "Agent of Influence"?

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Alice Palmer is a Chicago based academic, activist and former friend, employer and political ally of Barack Obama.



In the mid 1990s Alice Palmer, then an Illinois State Senator, employed Obama as her chief of staff, when she attempted an ill-fated run for the US Congress.

Obama was part of Friends of Alice Palmer, alongside controversial property developer Tony Rezko and Democratic Socialists of America members [Danny Davis](#), Betty Wilhoite and Timuel Black-also a member of Committees of Correspondence).



Later Palmer introduced Obama as designated successor to her Illinois State Senate seat, in the living room of former

Weather Underground terrorists Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn, while DSA member, former communist and long time Obama friend [Quentin Young](#) looked on.

The Palmer/Obama relationship soured after Obama refused to step down when Palmer decided she wanted her State Senate seat back, after her Congressional bid failed.

Obama went on to win the seat unopposed, after he knocked Palmer and his other rivals off the ballot, by challenging the legitimacy of their nominating signatures.

Alice Palmer was the first rung of Obama's ladder to power.

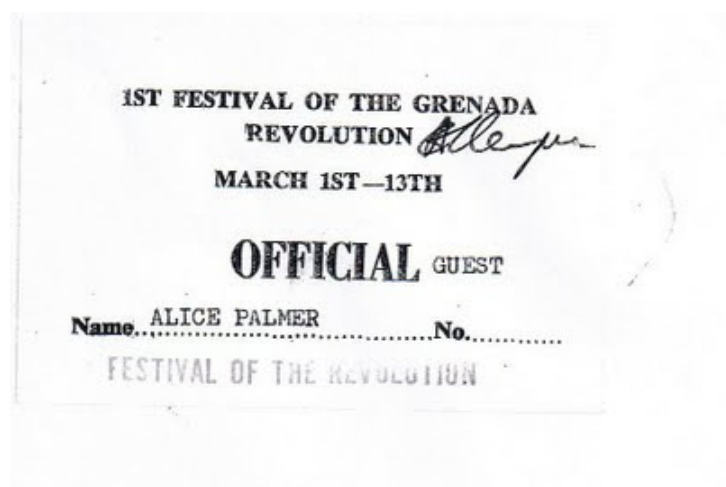
It has long been known that [Alice Palmer](#) was a communist front activist, as were [many in Obama's orbit](#).

More seriously however-new evidence shows that Alice Palmer had high level connections behind the "Iron Curtain" and may have been a Soviet "agent of influence"-that is, a conduit of Soviet propaganda and policy, to the US and the "third world".

What is the evidence?

Alice Palmer and her husband Edward "Buzz" Palmer had radical connections in Chicago and abroad going back at least into the 1970s.

In 1980, Buzz Palmer and Alice Palmer were invited by the Maurice Bishop led government of the Caribbean island of Grenada, to attend celebrations marking the first anniversary of the country's Cuban/Soviet backed "revolution". A revolution overturned by US troops three years later.



It is unclear whether or not they attended, but Alice Palmer was to work closely, a few years later with Bishop's US

educated press secretary, Don Rojas.

Alice and Buzz Palmer established the Black Press Institute (BPI) in Chicago around 1982. In a December 24 1986, interview with the Communist Party USA paper, People's Daily World, Alice Palmer explained BPI's role in influencing decision makers such as the Congressional Black Caucus.

After the 1960s some of us looked around and observed there was no national Black newspaper...So we started the Black Press Review. We received the Black newspapers from around the country, reprinted articles and editorials that gave a sense of the dynamics and the lives of Black people, and sent them out to the Congressional Black caucus and other opinion leaders, saying "Look, here is what Black America is thinking and doing".

BPI's journal New Deliberations, carried articles such as "Socialism is the Only Way Forward" and "Is Black Bourgeoisie Ideology Enough?"

In 1983 Alice Palmer travelled to Czechoslovakia to the Soviet front, World Peace Council's Prague Assembly-the first of several known trips to East Bloc countries.

From 1983 to 1985, Alice Palmer was an Executive Board member of the Communist Party USA front group, the US Peace Council-an affiliate of the World Peace Council.

Of the 48 US Peace Council officers in 1983-1985, at least ten- Sara Staggs, Rob Prince, Michael Myerson, Frank Chapman, Otis Cunningham, James Jackson, Atiba Mbiwan, Pauline Rosen, Jose Soler and Denise Young were known Communist Party USA members or supporters.

A further eight, were involved in the 1990s, in a Communist Party splinter group Committees of Correspondence. They were Gus Newport, Mark Solomon, Linda Coronado, Barbara Lee, Kevin Lynch, Anne Mitchell, Arlene Prigoff and Alice Palmer herself.

In 1985 Alice Palmer was part of a delegation of 16 Afro-American journalists to the Soviet Union, East Germany and Czechoslovakia.



The trip was organized by Maurice Bishop's former pressman, now International Organization of Journalists executive, Don Rojas. Palmer's BPI and the National Alliance of Black Journalists also helped out.

Alice Palmer told the People's Daily World of December 24 1986;

The trip was extraordinary because we were able to sit down with our counterparts and with the seats of power in three major capitals-Prague, Berlin and Moscow. We visited with foreign ministers, we talked with the editors of the major newspapers in these three cities...

It was a very unusual trip because we were given access...Every effort was made to give us as much as we asked for...We came back feeling that we could speak very well about the interest of the socialist countries in promoting peace.

In March 1986 Alice Palmer covered the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Congress in Moscow, for the Black Press Institute.

On June 20 1986 the People's Daily World published a BPI article by Alice Palmer on the CPSU conference entitled "An Afro-American journalist in the USSR".

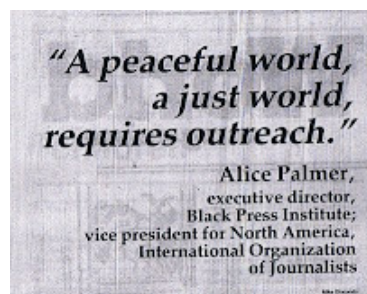


The article praised Soviet "central planning" and included such statements as:

"We Americans can be misled by the major media. We're being told the Soviets are striving to achieve a comparatively low standard of living compared with ours, but actually they have reached a basic stability in meeting their needs and are now planning to double their production."

Palmer claimed that America's white-owned press;

"has tended to ignore or distort the gains that have been made [by the Soviets] since [the Russian Revolution of 1917]. But in fact the Soviets are carrying out a policy to resolve the inequalities between nationalities, inequalities that they say were inherited from capitalist and czarist rule. They have a comprehensive affirmative action program, which they have stuck to religiously -- if I can use that word -- since 1917."



Alice Palmer, as editor of the Black Press Review, was elected International Organization of Journalists vice president for North America, at the organization's 10th Congress, October 20-23 1986, in Prague Czechoslovakia. Palmer's IOJ duties were to include co-ordinating the activities of chapters in the US, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.

The International Organization of Journalists was a well documented Soviet front operation, based in Prague, until its expulsion by the new anti-communist Czech government in 1995.

Like other Soviet fronts of the era , IOJ was staffed mainly by East Bloc personnel and was directed by the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union-which in turn was directly answerable to the Soviet Politburo.

The International Department, often with the assistance of the KGB, used fronts such as IOJ and World Peace Council, for "active measures"-programs to covertly influence the policies of other nations, to better advance Soviet interests. These might range from spreading propaganda and disinformation to embarrassing publicity stunts or hoaxes to destroying the career of an enemy of the Soviet Union , or advancing the career of a friend.

A summary of a paper by Bob Nowell entitled "The Role of the International Organization of Journalists in the Debate about the "New International Information Order," 1958-1978" states;

This paper examines the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), which it identifies as a Soviet-dominated organization. The paper suggests that the IOJ has capitalized on "Third World" countries' discontent with Western news media by offering itself as the ideological leader and trainer of anti-Western journalists.

It then examines the function and methods of the IOJ in the context of post-World War II communist international front

organizations; reviews the IOJ's structure, publications, and training centers; and explores its role in shaping "Third World" arguments in the debate about the New Information Order. The paper argues that the IOJ's efforts generally have served Soviet foreign policy on international communications.

The Sub-Committee on Oversight of the US House of Representatives asserted in February 1980 that, at that time the IOJ was in receipt of a Soviet subsidy estimated at US\$515,000.

Alice Palmer also traveled to the Soviet Union and Bulgaria during the IOJ conference trip, as presumably did the other five US delegates;

Jan Carew of BPI, a radical socialist journalist from Guyana.

Simon Gerson, US IOJ, a senior member of the Communist Party USA and perhaps significantly, the Party's foremost expert on influencing election outcomes.

Jose Soler US IOJ, then a member of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and the US Peace Council, now involved with the Communist Party USA.

Gwen McKinney and Leila McDowell, National Alliance of Third World Journalists.

McKinney and former Black Panther member McDowell, went on to work in public relations, including for 10 years as a business partnership. Their clients, collectively or separately, have included the SEIU, ACLU, NAACP, AFL-CIO, TransAfrica, Red Diaper baby Lani Guinier, Haiti's deposed Marxist president Jean Bernard Aristide, the socialist governments of Angola and Mozambique, Chavez's Venezuela and Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Change.

In the early 1990s, the McKinney/McDowell team influenced US government policy on Haiti, when they organized and publicized a hunger strike by prominent radical activist Randall Robinson.



After 27 publicity filled days, the Clinton White House US caved in to Robinson and demanded of the Haitian military, that exiled Marxist president Aristide be re-instated.

TransAfrica's Randall Robinson conducted a dangerous but successful hunger strike that changed the Clinton Administration's policy on Haiti. PR for the fasting activist was handled by the DC firm of McKinney & McDowell, whose other clients include President Aristide and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

In December 24 1986 People's Weekly World interview with Chicago Communist Party USA member Mike Giocondo, Alice Palmer explained the IOJ's use of the concept "media fairness".

Giocondo What is the IOJ's approach to the question of fairness in the media? How does it relate to the concept of "objective journalism" which is stressed here in the US?

Palmer The IOJ believes that there must be fairness in media, which is called for in a proposal for a New Information Order, which the IOJ supports. Fairness is not an abstraction, because journalists are not abstractions; we live in a world, we live in our particular societies, and therefore are caught up in whatever the dynamics of the situation are. This concept

of "Objective journalism" that is taught in journalism schools...is not possible...What we are striving for is fairness and balance of information.

To give you a concrete example, the Black Press Institute recently held a media dialogue in Southern Africa in Washington DC on how to make the information more balanced as it comes out of South Africa. The IOJ and the BPI believe there should be balance, that there should be fairness in recognizing the complexities, and that a voice must be given to those who are struggling against oppression".

Perhaps this is a clue as to the origins of the "Fairness Doctrine" that was long used to stifle conservative media in the US?

During her time as IOJ vice president, Alice Palmer worked with highest levels of the Soviet propaganda machine-with the Soviet journal Izvestia, with Romesh Chandra and the World Peace Council and the IOJ leadership.

Alice Palmer told the December 24 1986 People's Daily World;

The IOJ has adopted positions on nuclear weapons, trying to do away with the nuclear threat in the world...

I will be heading a taskforce on peace and disarmament. And at the conference I was co-moderator, with the editor of Izvestia (a Soviet government publication) ;, of a panel on peace and the news media. We came up with some very good suggestions. A number of the people complimented the Soviet Union for its efforts towards peace in these past few years-the moratorium and other things..

The IOJ has worked with the World Peace Council, and Kaarle Nordenstreng, Jiri Kubka and other IOJ leaders have worked closely with Romesh Chandra, the president of the World Peace Council.

IOJ delegations visit other countries to report on the peace proposals of the Soviet Union, so that people can hear about it. This by the way is an example of promoting fairness in the media.

The IOJ is the largest journalist organization in the world. its publications are published in 10 or 15 languages, and it reaches many people all over the world. So you can see that being fair in the media is very important, particularly in the Third World.

Alice Palmer saw journalists and the US "peace movement" as playing a very important role in the struggle for peace;

At the center of this is that the peace movement must stop the Soviet bashing. That is just not productive, it is not a good thing at all. I see over and over again that it is a barrier to our ability to work together in the United States and with the people of the Soviet Union for peace.

After her stint with IOJ had ended Alice Palmer continued to work closely with US communists.



Ishmael Flory, a veteran leader of the Illinois Communist Party USA, was honored at a September 21, 1991 function at Chicago's Malcolm X College, for his "outstanding contributions to the cause of peace, equality and justice".

According to the Peoples's Weekly World October 12 1991;

"Ishmael Flory is truly a man for all seasons" said State Senator Palmer, noting Flory's unflagging zeal for promoting a

progressive, people's agenda for economic security, an end to racism and for world peace. "He never gives up".

As late as 1994, when Palmer was known to be working with Barack Obama, she was also working closely with members of the Communist Party splinter, Committees of Correspondence.

It is now clear that Barack Obama has worked for years with Marxists with backgrounds in the Communist Party USA, Democratic Socialists of America and Committees of Correspondence.

That these groups have promoted Obama's career, both in Chicago and nationally, is undeniable.

However the Alice Palmer case illustrates something even more concerning.

That is, a key Obama ally had, only a few years before meeting the future President, strong relationships with senior East Bloc officials.

Alice Palmer played an active role in promoting Soviet Bloc policy at the height of the Reagan era-when the Soviets and their proxies were threatening US interests in every corner of the globe.

A few years later Alice Palmer was actively promoting the career of a young activist lawyer. That man is now willing and able to negotiate arms control treaties with Alice Palmer's old friends in Moscow.



A man who seems intent on promoting the interests of the former Eastern Bloc and the "third world", over those of the USA.

Is this merely ironic, or is it potentially catastrophic?

Obama File 91 [here](#)

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